

THE RAVEN.

A STORY FOUNDED ON FACTS.

CHAPTER OR CAW THE FIRST.



THAT my family is generally reputed to be much given to croaking I am well aware. Indeed it is not without reason that we protest against the many sins laid to our charge. In fact, there is an old saying among men, "Give a dog a bad name and hang him," which comes bitterly home to our race at times, as you will admit when you have heard what I have got to say. I am now going to indulge in a particular croak of my own respecting an occasion on which my character was most unjustly assailed. I shall never forget it, as it was the day on which our eldest daughter was married, or perhaps I ought to say, so as not to be misunderstood, the eldest daughter of my master, Farmer Griggs. My name is Niko, and any one who has travelled through Devonshire would know where to find me, as my fame has spread far and wide. I am on very good terms with all the family with whom I reside, who very properly think I am entitled to every consideration. However, on the memorable occasion above alluded to, I did get into a terrible scrape, which I will now proceed to relate, though I am suffering from a severe cold, which makes my voice rather husky and ruffles my otherwise very amiable disposition. It was at the "building season of the year" (this being by far the most natural way of expressing myself) that the following interesting and painful circumstances took place. I had taken my usual bath under the pump in the garden, and Griggs, for so I shall call my master, was walking about helping me to find sticks for building my nest, which I have been in the habit of doing or making every year for the sake of practice, though I never had an occasion to make any use of it, I am sorry to say. Presently I heard a chorus of voices, "Where's Niko? bring him here!"

"You had better not touch him, or he will give you such a peck with his strong beak," replied Griggs (who could not have expressed my feelings better had I prompted him what to say).

"Niko knows me very well," said Rebecca, in her pleasant, winning

voice; "Come, Niko! Niko! I want to make you very smart for to-morrow. A white rosette will look very handsome on your black feathers."

Rebecca's manner was so gentle that as she knelt down on the grass I could not do otherwise than obey her call, and with a "caw" of satisfaction approached her. While she measured the ribbon round my neck many times did I call aloud for "Charlie," whose name I had learnt to repeat from the many confidential conversations I had held with Rebecca. And this same Charlie was to be the hero of the next day's proceedings. He was a well-to-do young farmer living but a few miles distant from the Griggs, hence the intimacy which had sprung up between the two families; and though he possessed the surname of Glover, was always known and called by the more familiar name of Charlie.

The blushing Rebecca at last released me, and I was not sorry to be left once more to my own serious reflections and occupation, as I felt there was no time to be lost, as the season was advancing rapidly, and I knew that many of my neighbours had already completed their nests. But it was owing to their neglect of me that my character for honesty suffered. I am very well aware that I ought not to have picked up Emily Griggs' scarlet neck-ribbon, with the pretty little gold locket attached to it, but there it lay on the grass in the sunlight, and the temptation was irresistible. I got on famously with my nest, only stopping occasionally to say a word to the blue Iceland fox, and have a peck at him. I pitied his melancholy condition, being chained to his house or kennel, and thought it only kind to take some notice of him.

The door of my cage standing open, I retired to it early that night, being fatigued with my day's work, and had many pleasant dreams of the unfortunate little chickens who (decoyed to put their heads through the bars of my cage, by the little bits of potato I very artfully laid as a trap) soon came to an untimely end; but this happened some time ago, and when my cage stood in the farmyard; and though I like to remember that time, I think I had now better continue my story. You may be sure I was up betimes next morning, and left my cage to find more sticks. All the occupants of the house were equally early, and the preparations for the wedding absorbed their attention. I wandered about the garden, and when all the company had left to go to church, I made my way up the steps and into the

house. I was busily engaged picking a soft cushion to 'pieces for domestic purposes, when the front door was suddenly thrown open, and Charlie Glover rushed in without his hat, and in a great state of excitement. Mrs. Griggs, who had been much overcome by the excitement and preparations, had not accompanied the bridal party, but remained upstairs in her bed-room. "Oh! please what's the matter?" cried Mary, the general maid-of-all-work, nearly upsetting the junket which she was in the act of placing on the table when Charlie entered the room. "Oh, please can't I do nothing? I'll call missus directly," continued Mary, in great bewilderment, as Charlie rocked himself to and fro on a chair, or strode rapidly up and down the room, saying, "Where can it be? what could I have done with it?"

The clock was then heard to strike eleven, at which Charlie exclaimed, "It's too late; where's your mistress, Mary?" and rushing out of the room soon found his way upstairs.

But a few minutes elapsed, when Mrs. Griggs was heard calling, "Mary, Mary, make haste! come up directly!" Mary, who was all curiosity, did not need a second summons, but throwing down the cloth with which she was giving an extra polish to the plates ran upstairs. I hustled after her as quickly as I could, as I must confess to feeling some curiosity (though but a bird) to know the cause of this commotion, and for aught I could tell to the contrary, my assistance might have been required.

However, it was destined that my patience should be somewhat tried, for as I ascended the stairs, Charlie went past without taking any notice of me, only saying, "Thank you, mother! God bless you!" and left the house. Arrived at the door of Mrs. Griggs' room, I pecked at it with all my might, but received no answer. Disgusted with this treatment and want of consideration, I went out again into the garden, determined to forget this little annoyance in the pleasing task of building my nest. No sooner had I become immersed in this intensely interesting occupation, than I was disturbed by the return of the bridal party, who now, all smiles and merriment (though I could not help noticing, from Rebecca's tearful eyes, that she had been crying), came into the garden.

Thereupon I gave three prolonged "caws," and several repeated calls for "Charlie." This last worked a miracle with Rebecca, who laughed with the others at my appropriate style of congratulation,

and catching hold of the basket of wedding favours, she took up a rosette with a long piece of satin ribbon attached, and proceeded to tie it round my neck.

As Rebecca was in the act of knotting it, she jumped up suddenly (thereby nearly strangling me, and turning me blacker in the face than is my natural complexion, if I may be allowed to use the expression), exclaiming, "I should not be surprised if Niko know something about it."

"To be sure!" echoed a chorus of voices. "How was it we never thought of the raven before?—ravens always steal everything they can pick up."

Though I cannot say I understood one half of what they were talking about, I shall continue to repeat the conversation that followed, as you may be able to guess the meaning of it.

"Do you think it likely?" asked the bridegroom of Rebecca; "Niko is always kept shut up in his cage at night, and that is the only time I could have lost it. I cannot imagine it possible that he could have got at it."

"But he wasn't shut up last night," chimed in Rebecca's youngest brother John; "we forgot all about him; and I know he's building his nest somewhere, as Dad gave him some sticks yesterday, and he made off, in such a hurry with them."

"Does any one know where he is building?" asked Rebecca. No one giving a satisfactory answer to this question, a family council ensued, and it was resolved to hunt out my hiding-place as soon as possible. I felt dreadfully concerned at this, and remonstrated with ruffled feathers and a series of caws, but all to no purpose. However, I am happy to be able to tell you that their impertinent inspection of my nest had to be deferred, as they could not then succeed in finding it, and were obliged to go into the house to breakfast.

"But where did you put the ring last night?" questioned the farmer's wife, as she ladled out the junket.

"In my trousers pocket," replied honest Charles, "where I have kept it during the past week."

"Was it not dreadful for poor Rebecca!" said a sympathetic female friend, seated at the table. "Just as the parson was about to begin the ceremony he asked for the ring, and was obliged to stop, as Charles hadn't got it; Charlie had to run off home to find it, and poor

Rebecca sat down and cried all through the morning service till he returned."

I was listening to all that was said, at the open window, and here gave a "caw" of satisfaction, as I felt some one ought to speak, and it was quite my wish to show Rebecca some sympathy for the very forlorn picture she must have presented in the church. A shout of laughter from the company assembled succeeded my "caw," which I thought was very ill-timed on their part.

Farmer Griggs and his family being a very homely, quiet set of people, the neighbours and all soon dispersed after the conclusion of the breakfast, congratulating each other that the wedding really took place *that day*, though had not Rebecca's mother lent Charlie Glover her ring, the ceremony would not have *then* been concluded. Many and hearty were the good wishes given as the young couple got into the spring cart, hired for the occasion, and Charlie Glover drove off to his farm, promising to call round next day and tell of their safe journey home.

CHAPTER OR CAW THE SECOND AND LAST.

AND call round again he certainly did next morning, and much earlier than any one expected to see him; but it was to bring the astonishing piece of news, which I received with an open beak, that he had discovered the lost ring in his boot! and so my character was cleared of the dreadful charge of theft, never before or since brought against it. For when Emily Griggs found her scarlet neck ribbon and locket in my nest, she only blamed herself for having left it about. So ends my story; the moral of which is, though you may give a dog a bad name, *don't* hang him till you are quite sure he deserves to be hanged.



PRINCE BOOHOO AND THE DIVING BELL.



HE was much better for the powder. Of course it was a very awkward thing for any boy, let alone a prince, to have his head full of strawberry jam instead of brains. Every day there were bulletins in the "Times," in large letters, telling the people how the jam was going out and the brains coming back. The editor of the "Court Circular," who was known among his friends to be cousin to the wife's uncle's brother-in-law of the Grand Master of the Waterbutt, bought a pot of strawberry jam at Fortnum and Mason's, and had it emptied into a golden basin with a crystal cover, and said it had come out of the Prince's head. And the medical newspapers were full of essays on the process which was employed in effecting the Prince's cure. At last he was quite cured, and began to do his lessons again. But as the Queen had spoilt him while he was being dosed by Dr. Pilsandrux, he found it very hard to give his attention to his books.

He had professors from all the universities in the world staying in the palace. Each had a suite of rooms to himself, and they dined with the royal family by turns. But though the Prince had thus the advantage of their conversation, and though the King sometimes made them all talk at once about everything for hours together, before the Prince, in hopes that something might be said which he would attend to, he learnt nothing, because he attended to nothing.

At last the professor of homœopathy suggested that as the cause of the confusion in the Prince's brain might be traced to the fairy, perhaps he might be induced to learn if she could be found to teach him.

But how to find her was the question. The professors met in the library every morning for six months, and discussed different ways in which she should be searched for. First they advertised in the second column of the "Times," offering a reward of 500,000,000*l.* to any one who would bring her to the palace. But the King was angry, and said this was rather too much. Then they put an advertisement in, saying that if she would call at the office of the Solicitor for the Mint she would hear of something greatly to her advantage. Then they

sent a description of her to all the police stations, and the Habeas Corpus Act was suspended, so that she might be taken into immediate custody if found. But they could not find her, and the Prince cried so loud that the royal family and the professors and the soldiers on guard at the palace had to wear cotton in their ears lest they should grow deaf.

At last the Regius Professor of Chemistry suggested that as the fairy went away in a soap bubble, perhaps they could find her in one.

Then the King set all the bells in the town ringing for joy, and let all the prisoners everywhere out of prison, and gave the Victoria Cross to the Professor of Chemistry, and bought the Queen a brand new crown at Howell and James's, and had a large tub of soap-suds set on the grass-plot for the professors to blow bubbles from.

It was one fine Wednesday morning when all the professors, in court dresses and cocked-hats, first stood round the tub with long new clay pipes to blow bubbles, in hopes of finding the fairy in one. And they blew every morning and afternoon for a fortnight. Such numbers of bubbles rose up from the palace gardens, that you might see them, like steam, from all the country, miles around. But there was no fairy in any of them. They only made the pavements in the streets so slippery where they fell and burst, that the whole of the papers were filled with accounts of accidents, and meetings, and letters complaining of the state of the roads.

Indeed, matters grew so serious, and the funds went down so low, that thousands expected a revolution when they got up in the morning. But there were only larger editions of the papers, with more speeches, letters, and accidents in them.

Things were in this state when a little old man, dressed like a tinker, in corduroy breeches and plush waistcoat, with large mother o' pearl buttons, and a hair-cap, rang the front door bell at the palace. Just then the Prime Minister happened to be changing the cotton in his ears, so he heard the bell ring. When he opened the door, he thought the old man was the head of a mob, and ran off to the library for a copy of the Riot Act to disperse him without uttering a word, for he was very discreet, and did not like to say anything which might turn out to be unconstitutional.

When he came back the tinker had laid his cap on the floor, and was sitting on one of the hall chairs. Before the Prime Minister

could find his place in the Riot Act and begin, he got up and said: "Now look here, young man" (he thought it was the footman), "and just hear me. I'm the king of the gipsies, and naterally knows the queen of the fairies, leastwise the grandmother, whom you are after. I've heerd all about it. Lor bless you, sir! we reads the papers, we gipsies does. My missis says to me this morning, she says, why don't you go and get that 'ere reward."

"But you must produce the fairy," said the Prime Minister, taking a copy of the "Times" out of his pocket, and turning to the advertisement.

"I can't do that," said he, "but I'll tell you where she bides. I suppose you'll stand something handsome for that?"

"You must speak to the Chancellor of the Exchequer about this matter," said the Prime Minister. "He'll settle with you." So he took the old man to the pantry, where the Chancellor of the Exchequer was just then counting the spoons. Then he put the cotton back into his ears, and after hanging the Riot Act up on its peg under the almanack in the library, where it was kept handy, returned to the garden in which the Prince was crying, the professors were blowing bubbles, and the King, with his spectacles on, was reading the newspaper in an arm-chair under a tree, and grumbling at the people for grumbling at him.

"Stop!" said the King, pushing his crown away. And all the professors stopped; but as the Prince thought that he could do no wrong he went on crying. So he was told, and unfortunately he believed it.

"Be off!" said the King, throwing down the paper, and getting up out of his arm-chair and stamping. "The more I have of you the less the Prince learns. Be off!" So they laid down their pipes, and made low bows, and all walked backwards out of the garden. Then the King kicked the tub of suds down, threw the pipes over the garden wall, sat down in his chair, found his place in the newspaper, put his crown straight, took a pinch of snuff, wiped his spectacles, and went on reading.

He had not read far before the Chancellor of the Exchequer brought the tinker into the garden. He had bargained with him to tell where the fairy lived for a five-pound note, a keg of brandy, and half a hundred-weight of cavendish tobacco.

"Well," said the King, "and what do *you* want?"

"Please your majesty, I have ascertained from this person where the fairy is. He says she is sitting at the bottom of the sea spinning petticoats for mermaids from old cables and seaweed, and making playthings for young whales out of coral-beds and sunken ships' bells. I have made inquiries of the Submarine Telegraph Company, and find his information to be substantially correct."

"Well, then," said the King, "order him a pint of beer and let him go."

But he was obliged to give the tinker what the Chancellor of the Exchequer had promised, for constitutional kings are responsible for the acts of their ministers.

So the tinker put the five-pound note in one of his stockings, borrowed a wheelbarrow, which he never returned, of the head gardener, and wheeled off the tobacco and brandy. I am sorry to say that when, being king of the gipsies, he gave a great entertainment that night on Cut-throat Common, his subjects stole all that they did not drink and smoke. And the next day the tinker was brought up before the police magistrate for being drunk and assaulting a constable, and had to pay in fines all that was left of the five pounds. So his enjoyment of the reward was short, and not sweet. But he got the pint of beer which the king ordered, and the wheelbarrow, which he sold for seven and sixpence, when he had scraped off the king's name and royal arms which were painted upon it.

When the Prince heard that the fairy had been found, he cried so loud that the King sent a troop of Horse Guards to the Polytechnic to fetch the diving bell which was there, in order that she might be dived for at once and brought to the palace. But the professor of the Polytechnic, naturally hurt at hearing of the treatment the professors had received at the palace, and suspecting that the Horse Guards would not know a diving bell when they saw one—for it was not in their department—sent instead the last new electrical machine, loaded to the muzzle, and carefully wrapped up in whitey-brown paper.

The King was mightily pleased to get this parcel, and had it laid on the table in the library. Then he rang the bell, and desired the Grand Master of the Waterbutt to fetch the Prime Minister at once, and request the attendance of H.R.H. Prince Boohoo.

When they came he asked the Prince if he knew what it was on the table.

"No," said he. "Is it anything to eat?"

"Eat!" replied the King. "Why, it's a diving bell."

Then the Prince began to cry.

"Poor dear!" said the Queen, who had just come into the room; "you see how nervous he is. The least thing upsets him. You are too hasty, Starsungarturz."

"Stuff!" said the King. "Hold your tongue." Then he gave the Prime Minister a dig in the ribs, crying out, "Come now, wake up! Don't you see I'm waiting for you to undo the parcel? Be alive! Hey! Jump about!"

And they *did* jump about, for there came a shock out of the parcel directly the Prime Minister began to untie it, which made their hair stand on end, and the cotton fly out of their ears like soda-water corks.

The Prime Minister, indeed, was blown so flat against the wall that he stuck there, and couldn't be got off again. So they put a frame round him, and he served as a picture, and looked very well when they had got the President of the Royal Academy to paint a background to him.

However, the King was very angry, and ordered the Polytechnic to be pulled down when he had really taken the diving bell out of it. And he cut off the heads of the directors, and made lamps of their skulls all down the street, as a warning to people not to play tricks with him any more.

Of course this didn't please the people. It made them melancholy. And the lamps blew out, for neither the King nor the vestry would be at the expense of putting glass into the eye-holes.

But about the diving bell. When at last the Prince got it, he wouldn't let it out of his sight, and wanted to take it to bed with him; but the Queen said it could never be properly aired, and wouldn't let him have it to play with in bed lest he should catch cold.

So it stood in the middle of the library table, wrapped up in whitey-brown paper, till the First Lord of the Admiralty, who had the gout, grew well enough to go out in the Great Eastern and take soundings, so that he might put a buoy over the place where the fairy was sitting. At last he got everything settled, and came back to fetch the diving bell. The Prince cried so much to be allowed to see the fairy brought up that the King and Queen were glad to humour him, though they made a great favour of it.


"Now be sure," said the Queen, "that if you go down in the bell you take some dry stockings with you, lest you should get your feet wet."

"Whew!" said the King, when the Prince was gone; "I'll go to bed, and see if I can get a little sleep." So they laid a quantity of sawdust all round the palace, and muffled the bells, and tied up the knocker, and stopped all the clocks from striking, and hanged all the organ-grinders, and poisoned all the cats in the neighbourhood; and the King, after winding up his watch, and drinking a gallon of treacle posset, got into bed and went fast asleep for a week. And every night and day the Grand Master of the Waterbutt lay on the doormat, outside the King's room, and although he had his meals and the paper brought to him regularly, he didn't like it.

(To be continued.)

WALTER JOSEPH; OR, THE NAME REGAINED.

(Continued.)

 HE lady of the castle did not conduct her grandson, in his present ruffled state, into the presence of her husband. She rightly judged that he had better be combed and brushed, clothes and all, before he made a second appearance before Sir Hugh. She therefore followed Hannah. Oh! what wonders of interest and delight attracted the boy's attention as they walked through the halls and up the staircase. The range of gaudy fire-buckets, the fowling-pieces, the stags' horns, the two splendid dogs in the inner hall; the staircase of black carved oak, the heraldic emblems everywhere; he was quite lost in wonder. But when he reached his own room his delight burst into open rapture.

"Oh! what a jolly room! and what a fireplace! I could get up that chimney."

"I devoutly hope you won't!" exclaimed Hannah to herself; "I must mind about the spring, I see."

"And that window,—why, there's a whole little room in the window-place! Is all this wall? so wide as this? Why! I can't reach across it. Just see! why is this wall so wide then? and the window, what is the matter with the window? how queer it looks!"

"It is painted glass, with the light inside," answered his grandmother; "but ask Hannah to get you ready, and I will take you downstairs."

"Are you Hannah?" inquired the boy, as Lady de Brackenburgh left the room. "Do you know all about this wonderful, beautiful place? Oh! I wish you'd show it all to me," continued Joe, devouring the marvels around him, with mouth and eyes wide open.

"Am I Hannah? 'deed I should think I was. A deal Mr. James must have told him about the old home!" This was aside; then aloud she answered, "Yes, young master; I know all about the family and the old castle,—all the old stories and the new. I was here before your father was born, and I can tell you more stories than ever you heard in your life before."

"Really?" said the boy slowly, apparently awakening to the idea that this ancient servant was as uncommon as everything else in this strange home; "when can you tell me these stories? will you begin now?"

"No, sir, not now. Remember Sir Hugh waits for you downstairs, and you must be tidied to go down with my lady. You must not keep Sir Hugh waiting. He is a very great gentleman, almost grander than any nobleman, with his old castle and his old ancestors." Hannah paused. Then she thought she had better take advantage of the impression that her words ought to have made, so she continued: "and he was naturally, very naturally indeed, I may say, surprised to see one of them, that will be Sir Hugh one day—no! Sir Walter, the more's the pity—a-shaking himself out of that horsecloth to-night." These last words were uttered in a lower tone. It was Hannah's first attempt at the young master's tuition, and she felt doubtful how far she might go.

Joe did not understand her at all at first, so entirely unconscious was he of having offended. At last he remembered his nice nap in the carriage, and said, "Oh! but that was so comfortable, you can't think, Hannah; and I was so cold till I found the rug—only it smelt a little fusty and musty to be sure—I did enjoy my sleep though—and it was so funny waking up here at the door: it was just like a dream. But oughtn't I to have got up? and oh! was that my grandpapa, that old man who walked away so fast? I suppose he was afraid of the cold," concluded Joe.

"It's no good," thought Hannah; "maybe he'll get over it in time;" but whether it meant his name, or the nap, or the arrival, or what else,

Hannah did not explain. And as the lady called them just then, no more words were said. Joe hurried through his toilet, and turning out a very different, and much more presentable little lad than he had looked on his arrival, joined his grandmother on the stairs, and proceeded with her to the dining-room.

A most comfortable, old-fashioned room it was, and by the large fire sat Sir Hugh, diligently reading his newspaper. He heard the door open, and guessed who was entering by it. But he was altogether too much annoyed to turn round and look.

"Go and speak to your grandfather, my love," said Lady de Brackenburgh to her grandson, fearing much what his reception might be.

But Joe had no fear. He had been too much accustomed to kindness all his life to doubt receiving it now; and was too entirely unconscious of ill-doing to expect any blame.

He at once crossed the room, and planted himself at Sir Hugh's knees, leaning against his chair as he had been accustomed to do by his own father's. Finding himself still unnoticed, he stole one hand into Sir Hugh's, and with the other gently pushed aside the paper, peeping round it with so bright a smile, and speaking with a voice so gentle, that Sir Hugh at once laid down his paper, and began to inspect the boy.

"How do you do, grandpapa?" began Joe, a little surprised, perhaps a little shy at this cool greeting. "I am Joe. Papa said he thought you would be glad to see me. He sent his love to you——"

"Ha! and did your mamma too?" inquired Sir Hugh.

"No. She said you did not know her. But don't you, grandpapa, at all?"

Sir Hugh grunted; but his hand closed upon little Joey's, and his eyes still continued their inspection of his face. Joe bore the gaze without shrinking, indeed he was engaged in a similar examination of his grandfather. Something in Sir Hugh's face reminded him of his own father, and he was busily tracing out the resemblance and the difference, when Sir Hugh broke the silence by the question—"And what did you do in the carriage rug, sir?"

"What?" said Joey, bringing his thoughts together; "oh! why I was so cold; it is so cold here, grandpapa."

"But, my boy, had you no wraps then?"

"No; none, grandpapa; the rats ate my great-coat in the ship, and so I had none."

"But why didn't you ask the men for one?"

"Ask the men!" exclaimed Joe, in such a tone of astonishment and dismay that Sir Hugh's displeasure gave way to amusement, and he burst into an explosion of laughter as hearty as to his wife's ears it was musical. It was accompanied by an action, which Joe interpreted to mean that he might scramble upon his lap—an invitation that he accepted directly, seating himself there in perfect comfort, and basking in the fire.

Sir Hugh soon began his inquiries again, starting on his other grievance.

"So you are Walter Joseph, you imp, are you? Your mother ought to have known better than to give you such names, only she knows nothing about it, I suppose!"

"Mamma does not like my name," said Joey.

"Which name?" inquired Sir Hugh.

"Why, Walter; but I think it is a very pretty name."

"Do you? you are only half a de Brackenburgh; your mother does not like it then; why not?"

Joey was silent.

"Why not?" demanded his grandfather; "answer me, sir," he exclaimed, as Joe still continued silent.

"Answer Sir Hugh, my dear," said Lady de Brackenburgh.

"Because," said Joey, his face reddening and his voice quivering—"because she said one day that papa ought not to have called me Walter because it was a bad name, and that papa was wrong to give it me."

"And does she often call papa wrong?" asked Sir Hugh, not altogether pleased that any one should blame his son but himself—"does she often call papa wrong?"

"My dear Sir Hugh!" interposed his wife.

"She can't," replied Joe, solemnly, "because she doesn't think so. She never thought so, *else*," continued he, relieved at having confessed the only difference he had ever heard between his parents, "so she couldn't say so."

Joe had sat bolt upright for a minute or so. Now an accidental movement of Sir Hugh's threw him forward across the backs of two noble hounds, who had entered with him from the back hall, and were now stretched before the fire.

Of course both dogs sprang hastily up, and faced the sprawling boy

with looks of inquiry. "Oh! I say," cried he; "well, you needn't look at me. Ask him how I got here. I never asked to be here."

"They won't bite, they won't hurt!" exclaimed both grandparents hastily.

"Oh! I'm not afraid, I'm not a bit afraid," returned the boy, as he rose, and caressed the hounds; "they are beauties, they ought to live here."

"Why?" inquired Sir Hugh.

"Because it is all so wonderful and so beautiful," said Joey; and he began a hearty game of play with the dogs. Sir Hugh took up his newspaper no more. He sat watching and enjoying his grandson's gambols with those huge hounds. His displeasure had evidently vanished for the present, to the unspeakable relief of his wife.

Indeed, considering all circumstances, the advent of Joe Brackenburgh in the castle of his forefathers had been a decided success.

Joe's supper came early, and his bedtime likewise.

The next day he spent in an inspection of the castle under Hannah's care. He was a most agreeable listener and sight-seer. His wonder and rapture knew no bounds. Every corner into which she would take him, he eagerly explored; and to every story she told him he listened "with all his ears." To the story of the renegade Walter particularly, he paid the utmost heed, making Hannah describe again and again the scene before the great entrance of the castle, on that eventful morning when the old baronet found that his son had power to draw away half his tenantry from his banner.

"At this great door; was it here? Just in front, under this window?" asked Joe eagerly one evening, as Hannah was putting him to bed, about a week after his arrival. And Joe, as he spoke, tried to peer out of his lattice into the dark.

"Yes; just down there, right in front, Master Joseph. That old oak there—only you can't see it now—is called Walter's Oak, because there he stood—the bad man!—and dared Sir Hugh, as he rode up and down, swearing at him for his villainy," cried the energetic Hannah, working herself up into a fury of indignation. Nor was Joey behind her in wrath.

"And where did the old Sir Hugh go then, after he was conquered?" inquired he.

"No one knows," replied Hannah, mysteriously. "They say that there are passages in the walls that lead to rooms and hiding-places

in the turrets and about, and that he hid in some of them, and only came out when he wanted food. Then he used to creep out by night, and wander about, taking bread and meat where he could find them. They say he used, from his hiding-places, to hear his son cursing him in his feasts;—then, when all the guests were gone, he would come out, and eat the broken bits and crumbs left. They found his belt upon the stairs one night. Our Sir Hugh has hung it up in the dining-room."

"In a glass case?"

"Yes; the poor old gentleman must have dropped it as he passed one night."

"But how could he get in and out?" inquired Joe.

"Oh!" explained Hannah, warming with her tale, "there are spring doors in the walls in two or three places; several, I believe. Let me see! One in the back passage; one in the white chamber, that's two; one downstairs, in the passage near the servants' hall, that's three; one here, four——"

"Here! where?" exclaimed Joe.

"No, no, no, I couldn't say here," echoed Hannah, with equal eagerness; "besides, if there were, you never could find it, Master Joseph. Nobody knows anything of them, except Sir Hugh and a few besides; and they never would tell, indeed they wouldn't! Master Joseph, my dear; and those passages are so awful lonesome and dark, my dear, indeed they be," pursued she, in great anxiety, for it was just then *borne in* upon her that the spring Joe would find, and into the passages he would go. "And indeed, my dear boy," added she, to heap horror upon darkness and lonesomeness, "they do say—and I wouldn't take upon me to say it wasn't true—they do say that that Roundhead spy goes careering round them passages by night and day. Oh, my dear, 'tis awful to think of!"

Roundhead spy, darkness, horror, what cared Joe? the more she protested to the contrary, the more sure he felt that a spring door existed in his wall somewhere. And he believing that, her alarm was well founded. Nothing would please Joe like such a voyage of discovery to the old cavalier's haunts. There was certain proof that Sir Hugh had died abroad; but a wild tradition existed among the country people, and was more than half believed by Hannah herself, that he had perished with hunger between the walls, and that the awful nightly chase would never cease until his remains were discovered, and due honours

paid to them. High respect would of course be the reward of any person bold enough to search for them. But the bare idea that her young master should become involved in such horrors was alarming to her in the highest degree. So by every means, short of a downright lie, she sought to retract her unfortunate admission that a spring door was to be found in the oriel chamber.

Joe was entirely unconvinced. The information thus given by chance was far too exciting to admit of its escaping him so easily. He saw through all Hannah's endeavours to throw him off the scent. But he suffered her to go on, until, hoping she had effected her object, she began some other story far enough removed from all dangerous ground. This she continued until he was undressed and in bed. Then she tucked him in, put out his candle (heedfully carrying off his matches), kissed him, and turned to leave, just, however, undoing all the work she hoped she had effected, by observing, "Now don't think any more of those nasty passages, Master Joseph, now don't. You'd be killed in them, for certain, if you got in. Do go to sleep, and not think."

"I wish I could be sure he wouldn't then,—ay! and find it out too. I could bite my old tongue off—I could," muttered poor Hannah to herself, as she closed the door behind her.

Go to sleep, and not think!—a most unlikely thing. Long, indeed, was it before the boy's eyes closed. His imagination was full of the scene she had been painting. The fiery Sir Hugh on his prancing steed, with his drooping plumes and his flowing hair; the fierce, determined Walter under the oak, growing more stern, more hard as he bore the storm of fury that his father was hurling at him. Then the picture reversed; the son in possession of all, lord of the castle, master of the tenants; and his father lurking about, hiding here, hiding there, stealing forth to feed on his son's leavings, an unwilling listener to his curses. In the wall, in the wall; to be sure it was wide enough; but rooms, and passages, and hiding-places! oh! that Joe could but get in! A spring door in that very chamber! Suppose any one should come out! but no, *nonsense*. He must find it to-morrow. But how? and where? Joe puzzled and puzzled for a long time, how the passages could run, and in which direction the wider walls went, until at last he fell asleep. But only to dream that he was seated on a horse to follow Sir Hugh, but that he was held back for the Roundheads by his son.

(To be continued.)